

Outpatient physical therapy, speech language pathology services and occupational therapy services are important components of health care for many, and it is important that the guidelines of the Medicare system accurately encompass the needs of the population it serves.

The Balanced Budget Act of 1997 originally authorized a \$1500 therapy cap on physical therapy and speech language pathology services. Since that time, Congress has placed a moratorium on its enforcement three separate times. In February 2006, I voted for the Deficit Reduction Act, which included an exceptions process to ensure patients have access to clinically appropriate therapy services above the cap, as determined by the therapy professional. The exceptions process was intended to ensure access for an estimated 15-20% of beneficiaries needing care in amounts above the therapy cap and to stop possible over-utilization or abuse of therapy services. The "Tax Relief and Health Care Act of 2006" extends the therapy cap exception process through December 31, 2007.

